

O 281524Z OCT 05
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9201
INFO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010157

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/AND AND PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PINS](#) [CO](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR REPS CAUGHT IN FARC ATTACK ON VILLAGE IN
PUTUMAYO

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.4 (b&d)

11. (C) UNHCR officials were caught in the crossfire of a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) attack on a remote village in southern Putumayo Department near the Ecuador border October 23-24. UNHCR reps (none of whom were injured) were participating in a joint effort with the GoC to register internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other residents for national identity cards. UNHCR Resident Representative Roberto Meier said the FARC clearly knew UNHCR was present in the village yet launched the attack that lasted for nearly 14 hours. Meier said he is reevaluating UNHCR's presence in Putumayo Department and may close the office there and stop field missions to the area.

12. (U) A UNHCR field rep, volunteer, driver and a representative from the Colombian Government's national registry office traveled to a small town outside of San Miguel, Putumayo October 23 to provide national identity cards to IDPs and other residents. Many IDPs have lost or never had national identity cards that are required to apply for GoC assistance. UNHCR reps notified local authorities in advance of their visit by fax and radio (in accordance with established security procedures), and had been on the ground for five hours before the FARC attacked. Seven police and two civilians were killed, and nine were injured in the attack that lasted from 1430 on October 23 to 0400 on October 124. The police station and over 20 houses were destroyed as a result of the gas cylinder bombs launched by the FARC. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will provide emergency assistance to residents affected by the attacks.

13. (C) Meier said the FARC knew UNHCR was present in the town yet launched the attack anyway. The FARC has crossed a redline with UNHCR and Meier will reevaluate UNHCR's operations and field missions in Putumayo and other areas with significant FARC presence. The attack was the first serious security problem the UN has had in Colombia since the FARC kidnaped Meta governor Alan Jara who was riding in a UN vehicle with the UN Development Program director and other government officials in July 2001.

WOOD